things are tucked back, I say to my colleagues, almost in the fast-food ads in the newspaper. Every one of these things is going to have an enormous effect on your life, on my life, and on the lives of the American people, just as the State of the Union Message will tonight, just as what we do on the floor of the Senate this year.

These are the things that need debate. I am not suggesting that it is wrong to ask questions about the conduct of anybody—not of me, of you, of the President, or anybody else. I am not suggesting that. But what I am suggesting is let us not forget that we represent the most powerful nation history has ever known and the greatest economy history has ever known, at a time of economic boom. Let us not lose sight of what the American people want us to do in protecting this country.

But also let us ask—and I asked the same question incidentally during the activities of the special prosecutor in the Reagan era—let us ask whether we undermine the very things we want to protect in this country by allowing a special prosecutor situation to go way out of bounds of what its original aim was—especially when it becomes ideological, partisan, and allied with those who are carrying out civil cases which have nothing to do with the issue initially contemplated by Whitewater.

Mr. President, I will speak on this more as we go along. I see other Senators who are seeking the floor. I yield the floor.

Mr. INHOFE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I thank you. I ask that I be recognized for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEMISE OF OUR DEFENSE BUDGET

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have a great deal of concern over some of the things that we have been hearing during this interim when we have been considering what we would do if a surplus should become a reality. And we and many people have talked about problems in child care, in Medicare, in the environment, and in education. But the one thing, the one area, that we have the greatest deficiency in America in, and the great threat facing us, is what has happened with the demise of our defense budget and what has happened to our defense system.

Being the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee, we have had occasion to go around and pay visits to a number of our installations. Mr. President, this is not something that has just come on recently. Although now is when the public has finally a wake-up call, thanks perhaps to Saddam Hussein and Iraq, and realizes that there is a great threat out there.

I would like to read just one paragraph out of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act under, ''The Storm Clouds Are On The Horizon.''

> There are two key factors that threaten to undermine the readiness of our forces—a lack of adequate funding and the over commitment of a greatly reduced force structure. Unless we take necessary steps to correct these problems our military capability will incur significant degredation as we enter into the 21st century.

Mr. President, during this interim period, I visited a number of installations, including Nellis Air Force Base out in the Mojave Desert, and national training systems: The Army Advanced Training System, the Marine Advanced Training Center at Twentynine Palms, and the San Diego naval operations. Also, I have had occasion to be in Camp Lejuene, Fort Bragg, and Fort Hood, and these installations that are trying to keep us prepared throughout America, and throughout the world.

I can tell you that we really have a serious problem. We find that our operations are up, that now we have U.S. forces that have been used in 36 countries in the last 9 years. In the 9 years prior to that there was only 22 countries. We have had over a 300-percent increase in the pace of operations since 1990. We have 26 Army contingency operations in the 7 years since 1991 compared to 10 operations in the 30 years prior to that time. There were 26 operations in just 7 years compared to 10 over the previous 30 years. What this means is we have a ''op tempo,'' or a first tempo, which is a term that is used to measure how busy our people are that are out there and how this is going to affect all of our other operations.

So we actually have two problems that we are faced with. One problem is the fact that we have reduced our budget to an artificially low rate that puts us in the position where we cannot carry out the minimum expectations for the American people. And to be specific about it, we have roughly one-half of the force strength today that we had in 1991. I am talking about one-half the Army divisions, one-half the tactical air wings, and one-half of the ships floating out there. So that is a serious problem.

Then we have stood on this floor time and again and talked about the problems of our deployment on these contingency operations. I can remember standing on this floor in November of 1995 and saying that we cannot afford to send our American troops into Bosnia, and that if we do send them into Bosnia we will incur an operation and an obligation that will sustain the next two decades. The President assured us and promised us. He didn't estimate it, Mr. President. He said that this operation will not exceed 12 months, and that all of our troops will be home from Bosnia for Christmas in 1996. Of course, we knew that wasn't true. We knew the President was not telling the truth. I remember going over there and talking to them. When I told them up there in the northeast sector, the U.N., that it was going to be a 12-month operation, they laughed, and they said, ''You mean 12 years.'' They said it is like putting your hand in the water and leaving it there for 12 months. Take it out, and nothing has changed. The President also said that the cost would be $1.2 billion. Guess what? It has now gone over $8 billion in that effort.

That is not even a part of it. When the American people are told that we only have 8,500 troops over there in Bosnia, that is not true either because if you count the troops as of last week that are in Croatia and the Moravian countries, it is well up to over 12,000 troops. You go over to the 21st Tatical Command in Germany that supplies the logistics for the operation in Bosnia, and they are at 100-percent capacity, and their op tempo rate is 60 percent higher than it should be. What that means in normal terms is that if something happens in Iraq they have to support that logistically on the ground from the 21st Tactical Command. You go 10 miles down the road to Ramstein Air Force Base where they have the 86th Airlift operation, and I defy you to go there and find any ramp space that isn't being used as the C–141s, C–5s and DC–17s that are bringing in everything going to Bosnia are transferring onto C–130s, and off they go. We are using 100 percent of our capacity there. So that is a very, very serious problem that has to be corrected. We cannot do that and continue to try to rebuild a defense operation that has been decimated mostly by this administration. As we go around to these installations, we find that our retention rate is down, the divorce rate is up, and that we are approaching the hollow force days of the late 1970's. We know the two reasons: the budget cuts and the contingency operations.

We have stood on this floor for the last 5 years and talked about the threat that is facing the United States of America. It is not just that we are not adequately prepared in our state of readiness to take care of normal operations should something erupt, for example, in Iraq or Iran or Syria or North Korea, but we also do not have a national missile defense system. In 1983 we started one that should have been deployable by the year 1998. That is now. Someone was pretty smart back there. And yet this administration stopped that in 1992. We are now 5 years behind, if we get right back in, which I think we will now because there is a wake-up call that the American people have heard. And that is, I would have to say, some good news, that even right now this administration is agreeing with what they have refuted over the last 5 years.

I was very pleased to hear Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen stand up and say that we now know there are over 25 nations that have weapons of mass destruction, either biological, chemical or nuclear, and are working on the missile means to deliver those as far as the

United States of America. When Bill Cohen stood up and said Saddam Hussein—keep in mind, here is a guy who murders his own grandchildren—and Iraq under our close supervision still has enough DX gas to kill every man, woman and child on the face of this Earth in 60 seconds, finally America is waking up, and I am very pleased that has happened.

I have a couple articles here that I will not read from because my time is running out, but one article is the one that is the cover story of the current U.S. News & World Report that is out on the newsstands today. It is called: ''Can peacekeepers make war?'' And they get into the fact, as we have found, that if we had to bring these troops back and put them in a combat environment, it would take between 4 and 6 months to train them. So that exacerbates our problem. And the other is in the National Review. I ask unanimous consent that both of these articles be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See Exhibit 1).

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, we are going to have to do something and do that something pretty quick. Unfortunately, as the chairman of the Readiness Committee, I recognize the fact that we are going to have to come up with some money right away, in this coming fiscal year budget, in the defense authorization bill and the defense appropriations bill. We are finding that the Defense Department has engaged in policies that have caused us to foolishly use money that should have been used for readiness. So I am standing here saying we are going to have to do—the money can only come from one place. If we are going to try to keep our retention rate or get it back up, if we are going to stop the divorce rate going up, we are going to have to put some money in quality-of-life and force strength, and the only place that can come from is modernization.

As a strong supporter of the F–22, I can only stand on the floor of the Senate and say we are going to have to delay that program unless we are able to come up with some money to put into our budget for the coming fiscal year.

People who are very wise say, well, that is what we depend upon for future readiness, the F–22. Yes, we do, but we have to make a tradeoff for current readiness or future readiness. It has to be current readiness, with the threat that faces us.

I am here to tell you that we are facing a greater threat today than at any time since World War II. We have a reduced force, and we cannot meet that threat. It has to be changed.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

EXHIBIT 1

[From the U.S. News, Jan. 19, 1998]

CAN PEACEKEEPERS MAKE WAR?

(By Richard J. Newman)

In January 1991, eight Apache helicopters from the Army's 101st Air Assault Division were assigned to fire the first shots of the Persian Gulf war. Flying with their lights out, 50 feet off the desert floor, the Apaches sneaked deep into western Iraq and destroyed two key radar sites. The dangerous mission, which largely blinded Saddam Hussein to the subsequent deluge of attack aircraft, was a complete success.

Seven years later, the 101st is not performing so gloriously. During a November mock battle at the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., the division's gunners failed to destroy any of the antiaircraft missiles of the ''opposition force.'' As a result, the OpFor shot down all the 101st's Apaches when they tried to mount a deep-strike mission. The OpFor put away half of its antiaircraft missiles, and the 101st tried again. Once more, all its helicopters were shot down. Then the OpFor put all its missiles away—and still shot down six Apaches with tanks and other guns, losing only four tanks in the process. While the OpFor was probably a tougher foe than the Iraqi military, officials familiar with the NTC say the 101st's performance reflects a general deterioration in the last five years in the capabilities of units training at Fort Irwin. It's a ''very sad situation here,'' said one NTC official.

Throughout America's armed forces, there is mounting evidence that conventional combat skills—and the warrior ethic that goes with them—are being eroded by a combination of downsizing, budget cuts, and widespread commitments to noncombat operations in Bosnia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. A December report by a Senate Budget Committee analyst cited ''extremely serious Army-wide personnel and training (i.e., readiness) problems,'' such as units half staffed in key positions like infantry and mechanics. With troop levels being cut to free more money for high-tech weapons systems, the report predicted, those problems will get worse.

Soldiers seem to agree: In a 1997 ''leadership assessment,'' Army officers in 36 percent of a series of focus groups said their units don't know how to fight; nearly half of those groups expressed concern about the Army's growing ''hollow,'' a provocative allusion to the inept, so-called hollow force of the 1970s.

In the Air Force, ''mission capable'' rates for some fighter jets, which measure how many planes can be ready for war on short notice, are more than 15 percentage points lower than they were in 1989. ''We've got some severe stresses,'' says Gen. Richard Hawley, head of the Air Force's Air Combat Command. ''There's not enough resilience in the force.'' Even the Navy and the Marine Corps, which are better structured to endure long deployments, are struggling. Downsizing and budget cutting have left some ships short of parts and crew members and have forced commanders to increase their estimates of how long it would take to be ready to fulfill wartime tasks. Last fall Rear Adm. Daniel Murphy, the Navy's head of surface warfare, said it may be necessary to pay bonuses to sailors in the surface fleet—like those paid to aviators and submariners—to keep experienced sailors in the Navy.

Do gaps in the force matter? The U.S. military can obviously afford to relax the hair-trigger posture that became the norm over 40 years in the cold war. U.S. defense funding is roughly equal to that of the next six spenders combined. The once-feared Soviet military has dwindled from 4 million troops in 1990 to a Russian force of 1.2 million—with such problems that it could not defeat a ragtag rebel force in the tiny province of Chechnya in 1995. Analysts think it will be at least 15 years before a ''peer competitor'' such as China or a resurgent Russia could challenge the United States militarily. No country now poses a serious threat to American territory.

More with less. But in many ways the American military has a uniquely demanding job today. Instead of preparing largely for territorial defense, U.S. troops must safeguard vaguely defined American and global ''interests'' in an increasing number of far-flung places. Since 1990, U.S. armed forces have been utilized in 36 foreign missions, compared with just 22 between 1980 and 1989, according to analysis by the Congressional Research Service. And there have been fewer troops and dollars to carry out those missions. Since 1989, administrations of both parties have cut the armed forces by one third, and the defense budget by 30 percent, after inflation. The changes were inevitable, with the demise of the Soviet threat, but they still affect the military's ability to meet increasing demands.

The busy pace that results appears to be driving out more experienced service members than ever. In the Marine Corps, 23 of the 175 captains chosen last year to attend the prestigious Amphibious Warfare School in Quantico, Va., decided instead to leave the Marines; statistics weren't kept before 1995, but officials say it used to be rare for more than three or four to drop out. The Army recruited only 70 percent of the infantrymen it needed in the year ending last September, though Army officials expect that to improve. A 1997 report released by Rep. Floyd Spence, chairman of the House National Security Committee, cited Army statistics showing that 125 infantry squads—equivalent to about five 500-man battalions—are unmanned, keeping units from training at the appropriate combat strength. And increasingly, Army and Air Force units put off combat training because they are too busy with ''low intensity'' missions or need the money elsewhere.

In the past, military leaders have used readiness ''scares'' to plead for more money for favored weapons or other programs. These days, most Pentagon officials understand that total defense budgets will not rise—and so a gain for one branch comes out of another's share. But they also complain that frequent ''low intensity'' missions—such as peacekeeping, counterdrug operations, humanitarian efforts, and even joint exercises with new Eastern European allies—are diluting the war-fighting capability of U.S. troops by disrupting combat training and breaking down unit cohesion. Ultimately, that is producing an identity crisis: Is the American military's purpose still ''fighting and winning our nation's wars,'' as the Pentagon's national military strategy states? Or are America's enemies so few and feeble that U.S. troops can focus less on war and more on other problems throughout the world?

By its own benchmarks, U.S. military manpower and readiness are falling short. Since 1993 the government's national security strategy has called for U.S. troops to be prepared to fight two regional wars, presumably in Korea and Iraq, less than 45 days apart. (Before that, the Pentagon planned for one very large war with the Soviet Union and lesser conflicts elsewhere, but didn't quantify them.) The Pentagon's quadrennial defense review, released last May, said U.S. forces also must be prepared for greater involvement in ''smaller-scale contingencies,''

such as peacekeeping in Bosnia and the ongoing enforcement of the Iraqi no-fly zones—even though at the same time the Pentagon cut the military by 62,000 troops.

That reduction was part of a deliberate trade-off to pay for new weapons, such as the joint strike fighter and the F–22 aircraft, a new carrier, and tank upgrades. Many analysts agree on the need to modernize some fighting platforms that are 15 to 20 years old. Yet to some officials, the Pentagon's reliance on the offerings of defense contractors borders on a dysfunctional dependency. ''We can beat the Chinese or the Russians, but we can't beat Lockheed Martin or Ingalls Shipbuilding,'' says Army Lt. Col. Ralph Peters, an intelligence analyst who has written widely on strategic planning. ''We're spending so much money on aircraft and ships that we'll paralyze the future force.'' Bases that are no longer needed to support a smaller force also suck up cash. The Pentagon wants to close some of them but has met resistance from Congress.

Such trade-offs make it harder to meet demands on the military today. A classified Pentagon memo written after a Joint Staff war game last spring said the game ''made it obvious that we cannot sustain current levels of overseas presence,'' citing negative effects on ''maintenance, personnel, and training readiness.'' Frederick Kagan, a history professor at West Point, says downsizing alone would make it difficult for the United States to fight even one regional war today. The Army, he says, has only six heavy divisions—too few to field the six division equivalents that fought in the Persian Gulf war while still leaving one division in South Korea to deter an invasion from the north. John Correll, editor of Air Force magazine, points out that the Pentagon said it would take 24 fighter wings to win two wars when it first scripted that scenario in 1993. The Air Force has since been cut to 20 fighter wings, but the Pentagon says this is still enough.

Perhaps most significant is that the declining emphasis on war fighting is not being managed—it is just happening haphazardly as units cut whatever corners on training time and war-fighting preparations they can in order to fulfill assigned missions or meet their budgets. In the Persian Gulf region, for instance, there are usually anywhere from 100 to 300 aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. Pilots of F–15, F–16, and A–10 jets typically fly four-hour patrols that consist mainly of ''left-hand turns.'' The flights are so routine and uneventful that pilots pass the time asking each other movie-trivia questions over their radios. During 45- to 90-day tours in the desert, pilots spend so little time practicing combat maneuvers that when they return home, it takes two to three months of training before they are considered fully ready for war again. A 1997 Rand study even suggests that repetitive air patrols may amount to ''negative training,'' desensitizing crews to dangers and degrading their situational awareness.

Synergy. Those problems on their own may be manageable. But shortfalls in training, readiness, and manpower often feed on one another, multiplying the impact of each. For the 69th Fighter Squadron at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia—which soon will leave for a 60-day rotation enforcing the Iraqi no-fly zone—a shortage of spare parts means ground crews must regularly ''cannibalize'' jets, taking parts from one to make another fly. That is not a new practice. But the wing's recent cannibalization rate, which measures parts taken from jets versus missions flown, has topped 25 percent, three times higher than its 8 percent goal. Overall, the wing's goal is a mission-capable rate of 80 to 84 percent; but rates have been below 70 percent for over a year. The mission-capable rate for all F–16s belonging to Air Combat Command is 77 percent, down from 90 percent in 1989; for F–15 air-to-air fighters the rate has fallen from 85 percent to 77 percent.

With a smaller military, troops are being sent more frequently on drawn-out missions such as those in Bosnia—which President Clinton last month declared to be an open-ended commitment—and the Persian Gulf, where the U.S. commitment is 7 years old and growing. Increasingly long deployments away from home and aggressive hiring by growing commercial airlines are driving many pilots out of the Air Force once they have fulfilled their seven-year commitment. In the A–10 squadron at Moody, six out of the nine pilots eligible to leave this year decided to do so—despite increased bonuses of up to $22,000 for staying in. Throughout the Air Force, retention rates for pilots fell to an estimated 75 percent in 1997, down 12 points from 1995 levels. The Air Force has had other pilot crunches—in the early 1980s, for example, when airlines were aggressively luring away fliers—but the problem then was not exacerbated by budget cuts and increased missions, as it is now.

The Air Force is compensating by running more people through flight school—but with junior pilots replacing senior ones, there could soon be a sharp drop in overall experience levels. Mechanics and other key personnel are also affected. One C–130 pilot says: ''We're getting a lot of [mechanics] with no C–130 experience. They ask, 'How do you turn this thing on?' If he's asking how to turn it on and it's his job to fix the system, there's obviously a problem.'' Many pilots fear that such shortages could lead to more accidents.

The Army faces similar strains. After one infantry unit returned from a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia in 1994—where it went without its Bradley fighting vehicles—it received the lowest score in its division on tests of its ability to shoot and operate its Bradleys. A Rand study to be released within the next month found that Army troops sent frequently on peace operations, such as military police and certain transportation units, are underprepared for their wartime tasks.

As the service most dependent on people, the Army is particularly vulnerable to ripple effects that begin with personnel shortfalls. A lack of infantrymen, mechanics, and mid-grade officers forces the Army to stitch units together in order to field the appropriate force for missions in places such as Bosnia. That in turn breaks up units, undermining the cohesion needed for infantry, tanks, artillery, and aviation to fight as ''combined arms''—a level of performance critical to success in modern combat.

The 1st Armored Division in Germany epitomizes the problem. It has two staffs—one in Germany, one in Bosnia—and troops in at least three different regions. ''The logic of maintaining readiness is thrown astray by this piecemeal discombobulation,'' says an Army general. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have begun to study what would happen if units doing peace operations were suddenly needed in a war—or two wars. Early findings: Moving troops out of one place and into a war zone would ''put a strain on an already fragile transportation system,'' according to one classified Pentagon document. Another cites ''many more risks''—including the potential loss of equipment in a hasty withdrawal and the two to six months it would take to retrain units for war.

Above all, some fear that soldiers are not learning the basic lessons needed to succeed in war. Units going through the National Training Center or the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana are barely more than half staffed, says retired Marine Corps Gen. John Sheehan. That, the Senate Budget Committee report noted, violates the Army's doctrine to ''train just as you go to war.''

''We're raising a generation of young leaders who are not learning to run large organizations,'' says Sheehan. ''They won't know how to command their troops even if they get them all in a war.'' More important may be the messages sent by top commanders. ''We have no leaders talking to us about how important it is to prepare your soldiers for battle so they don't die in combat,'' says an Army major. ''It's disheartening to many of us.'' That may also be causing deeper problems not easily fixed by more funding, higher-tech weapons, or better training. ''The brass are refusing to stand up for the warrior spirit,'' says John Hillen, a Persian Gulf war veteran and fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Recent imbroglios over the proper role of women in the military have added to the distractions.

Hanging touch. Top Pentagon leaders insist the military is not going soft. In an interview last week, Gen. Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dismissed comparisons between the demoralized force of the 1970s and today's. ''There is a world of difference between where we were then and where we are now,'' he said. ''We have a tremendously talented bunch of young men and women.'' Nor does Shelton believe that anecdotal reports of problems, on their own, indicate a readiness shortfall. He and others say that the Pentagon's carefully monitored readiness statistics do not indicate serious degradations in the force.

But those figures—which measure how long it would take a unit to be ready for war—are somewhat subjective, based on commanders' own estimates of how well their troops are trained. Some doubt their validity. ''The readiness rates are false,'' one Army colonel flatly states. ''There is a lot of pressure from higher-ups to inflate them. It's like all the students are getting A's, then flunking the final exam.'' Shelton does acknowledge some readiness ''issues,'' particularly problems with highly skilled troops leaving the service. Some senior and retired leaders who served during the 1970s think those are ominous signs. They say that readiness tends to slip gradually at first—but at a point begins to drop precipitously, and then becomes very hard to reverse.

The Pentagon has protected some of its key units from cutbacks and other distractions. The 2nd Infantry Division in South Korea, for example, which could absorb the brunt of a North Korean invasion with less than three days' notice, is staffed at over 100 percent, including some ''augmentees'' from the South Korean Army. Commanders are so focused on war they are almost scornful of any other type of mission. ''We don't face the same problems stateside units do,'' says Lt. Col. Robert Sweeney, former commander of the 4th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. ''My focus is clear. I'm not going to be doing humanitarian operations.'' Even though assignments to Korea are considered a ''hardship tour''—an entire year's deployment, with no family allowed for most troops—commanders say a clear focus, and a ready enemy, make it easy to sustain morale.

JSTARS, where are you? But even there the tip of the spear may be getting duller, U.S. military planners in South Korea say budget constraints and competing demands elsewhere keep them from getting enough access to ''special mission'' assets such as Joint STARS surveillance aircraft, F–117 stealth fighters, and F–15E strike jets. ''We're being told to be more efficient,'' says an intelligence staffer in Seoul. ''But efficiency doesn't cut it in war. Redundancy does.'' Some analysts think new technology may greatly reduce the numbers of ground troops and conventional platforms needed in

a war. But relying on new systems before they are battle tested leaves troops feeling they have less margin for error.

Shortfalls appear to be more serious in the Persian Gulf, where a rematch with Iraq would probably come with more advance warning—but still be bloody. A radar operator who has worked at an airfield in Kuwait says there are no longer any backups for the facility's radar, the only ground-based system available for tracking nearby aircraft, including enemy planes. ''We're a forward operating unit and we still don't get what we need,'' he says. ''When that baby goes down and you realize there's no backup, you start saying, 'Where is the priority?' ''

Troops' morale, an intangible but essential ingredient of success in combat, can weather temporary problems. But persistent shortages and seemingly never-ending commitments take a toll. ''Troops don't understand why, if what they do is so important, they don't give us the tools to do it,'' says Lt. Col. Michael Snodgrass, commander of the 69th Fighter Squadron at Moody Air Force Base. Enthusiasm suffers first. Before Desert Storm, says Col. Billy Diehl, acting commander of Moody's 347th Wing, the Air Force's annual Red Flag aerial combat exercise ''was the highlight of the year.'' But in 1996, when he arrived at Moody, ''everybody was thrilled that it was canceled.''

A more important casualty is confidence. A C–130 pilot says that due to training cutbacks, ''My own skills are nowhere near where they were. Some of the new guys, I'm deathly afraid to go to war with them. They just don't have the training.'' John Stillion, a former Air Force navigator and Rand analyst, says that on a recent visit to an Air Force base, morale was ''far worse than I've ever seen it. I'm amazed at how bitter they sounded.''

Surprisingly, few in the military—which studies show is overwhelmingly conservative today—feel the solution is to withdraw from its peacekeeping missions in the world's trouble spots. One typical Army colonel strongly objects to the political gamesmanship of setting unrealistic deadlines for troop adjustments in places such as Bosnia. But nonetheless, he believes U.S. troops should be there: ''It is appropriate use of the military, mainly because nobody else can do it.''

Some practical steps could help strike a better balance between preparing for war and preserving peace. Many in the Army would like to see the National Guard shoulder more of the burden for peacekeeping, Rand researchers and others argue that a more modular structure would make the Army much more flexible. Ideas include self-supporting combat groups of about 5,000 troops—one third the size of a division—or discrete support units that can each carry out a variety of functions, instead of specializing in transportation or engineering. Some in the Air Force are pushing a ''cop on the beat'' approach, enforcing no-fly zones with random patrols, augmented by sensors that detect air and ground movements.

But what America's troops crave most is a clear message from their leaders stating the purpose of U.S. forces. Are they warriors, whose main job is to fight and win wars? Or police assigned to prop up struggling nations and keep the world safe for American commerce? If U.S. forces must fulfill both roles, how can they do each well? Many members of the military believe that before those questions can be answered, there needs to be greater awareness of what U.S. troops accomplish by being everywhere they are—and what risks are involved in spreading them ever thinner. ''We need a better understanding among the American public that we have interests outside the United States,'' says Lt. Gen. Joseph Hurd, commander of the 7th Air Force in South Korea. Once those interests are sorted out, it wouldn't hurt to inform the troops in the ranks, either.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET SURPLUS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, as we reconvene today for the second session of the 105th Congress, there is important work ahead of us. I am certain my colleagues join me in acknowledging that regardless of the headlines and the commotion that is going on outside this chamber, the Senate cannot be distracted from its responsibility to carry out the will of the people. America's families, its taxpayers, have great expectations of us, and we must not let them down. So I look forward to what we can accomplish together on their behalf.

I have to admit, though, that I have mixed feelings about the session ahead of us. I think Will Rogers explained my predicament best when he said, ''This country has come to feel the same when Congress is in session as when the baby gets hold of a hammer.''

When the baby finds the hammer, somebody almost always gets hit over the head. In 1998, the ''hammer'' is the much-anticipated budget surplus, and I am afraid it may very well be the taxpayers who get whacked by it.

Earlier this month, the Congressional Budget Office projected that the federal deficit would decline sharply this year from its original estimate of $125 billion to $5 billion. It also forecast a $14 billion surplus in 2001 and a total of $665 billion in surpluses by the end of the next decade.

Now, tax dollars are always considered ''free money'' by the big spenders here in Washington, and the thought of all that new ''free money'' is creating a feeding frenzy here on Capitol Hill. The rush to spend is like something right off the Discovery Channel, like the free-for-all that results when a pack of hungry predators gets hold of a piece of raw meat. A ravenous creature in its own right, Washington will attack a pile of tax dollars and spend, spend, spend until it is all gone—until the bones have been stripped of every last morsel of meat.

Mr. President, with all due respect to my colleagues in both chambers, I am disgusted by this ''stampede to spend,'' and angry that it is being championed on both sides of the political aisle. I am a Republican, elected by the people of Minnesota to carry out my promise to lower their taxes and rein in a federal government that has grown out of control. Republicans gained control of Congress because we are the champions of the taxpayers—the American people trusted us to carry out our promise when we said, ''Elect a Republican majority and we will help you build a better life for yourselves and families by curbing Washington's impulse to spend your precious tax dollars.''

They certainly did not elect Republicans thinking we would build a bigger, more expensive government the first chance we got.

Not only are we rushing to join the spending stampede, but we are doing it before the budget is actually balanced, before a surplus actually exists, before even a single surplus dollar makes its way into the federal treasury.

If this is a race to prove who can be the most ''compassionate'' with the taxpayers' dollars, it is a race nobody is going to win, and one the taxpayers most certainly will lose. When is Washington going to understand that you cannot buy compassion? And Washington cannot give something to Americans, without taking more from Americans. I hear the big spenders say that Americans are struggling so Washington needs to do more. And ''more'' always means taking more from Americans so Washington can control, shape, and direct our families and our lives.

Who is going to stand up in this chamber for the taxpayers if the Republicans will not? If our party is abandoning our commitment to fiscal responsibility—the commitment that built a congressional majority—we are abandoning the taxpayers as well. And do not think the taxpayers have not noticed. One of my constituents, Dale Rook of Beardsley, Minnesota, summed up the feelings of many in a recent letter: ''It appears that the Democrats are still in control of both Houses of Congress,'' he wrote. ''Why? What has happened to the Republican Party?'' he wrote. A lot of us are asking that very same question.

Of course, the Republicans do not have a monopoly here when it comes to spending. I am deeply troubled by what is happening on Capitol Hill among both parties, and every taxpayer ought to be as well. And as a Senator representing the nation's families—America's hard-working, taxpaying families—I pledge that they will not be forgotten.

Let me speak specifically about the deficit and the anticipated surplus. Both Congress and the President have rushed to claim the credit for the decline in the federal deficit. Mr. President, I think we should give credit where credit is due. In this case, the credit really belongs to the robust American economy and the working Americans who propel it. And Washington should not be allowed to take that away from American families, workers, and business. Washington should not gain more control of our spending.

The economy, not any government action, has produced this unprecedented revenue windfall. These unexpected dollars have come directly from working Americans—taxes paid by corporations, individuals and investors. If the economy continues to generate 8